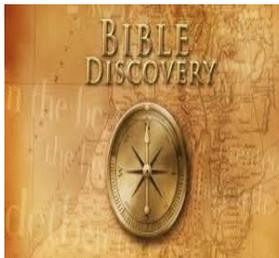


7 Dec 14

Matthew 1:18-25

## God Draws Near to Joseph



So often within the Christmas story we center our thoughts, and rightly so, on the birth of Jesus, God's Son – in fact Almighty God who came in human form to earth to save us from our sins. This morning, I'd like to speculate for a few moments on the man God chose to be Jesus' earthly father. Let me give you a brief background to the scene.

Joseph bore a proud name, recalling the ancient Jewish name of one of the twelve patriarchs, Joseph the son of Jacob who was sold by his brothers into Egypt and who later became second to Pharaoh in power over all Egypt. Joseph was also of the lineage of King David as prophecies had foretold. Interestingly, his name meant "to add" which is the role he would play in Jesus' life on earth – adding to his education, his provision, his preparation. Joseph was no doubt older than Mary. While girls were married by 13 or 14 -- old enough at that age to bear children -- husbands on the other hand needed to be established enough to support a wife before they could enter into marriage. They were legally obligated to provide food, clothing, and shelter. Joseph had waited to be married, planned to provide as a good husband, and really cared about Mary. He did not plan on the events which were to unfold in his life.

The Bible tells us in Matthew, Joseph was a righteous man. His actions toward Mary, his fiancée, also reveal him to be a kind and sensitive man. When Mary told Joseph she was pregnant, he had every right to feel disgraced. He knew the child was not his own. Perhaps he thought Mary, who was legally his wife, had an affair with someone or she'd been raped – she'd said nothing of either however. The only conclusion he could reach was that his betrothed was an adulteress! Joseph not only had the right to divorce Mary, under Jewish law she could be put to death by stoning. Although Joseph's initial reaction was to break the engagement, the appropriate thing for a righteous man to do, Joseph still treated Mary with extreme kindness. Even when personally wronged, Joseph had the quality of being sensitive to someone else's shame. He did not want to cause her further shame, so he decided to act quietly.

In the midst of all this God draws near to Joseph by sending an angel in a dream to him verifying Mary's story, reassuring him their marriage was God's will. Having heard from God, Joseph willingly obeyed Him, in spite of the public humiliation he would face. Perhaps this noble quality made him God's choice for the Messiah's earthly father.

In first century Galilee, the home Joseph would provide Mary was within the house in which he lived with his parents, and perhaps grandparents, as well as brothers (and their wives) and any unmarried sisters who might be at home. Only as his own family grew, would Joseph and his family likely get their own place. This may sound complicated, very crowded and non-private to you, but it had its advantages. Instead of a young couple out on their own, each member contributed to the economy of the family, making enough for the whole to subsist on. A couple cut off from the economy of the extended family would have to fend for themselves, as Mary and Joseph had to do in Bethlehem and later in Egypt. Those were mighty lean times.

**Joseph had  
the quality of  
being sensitive  
to someone  
else's shame**

The Bible does not reveal much detail about Joseph's role as father to Jesus, but we know from Matthew that he was an excellent earthly example of integrity and righteousness. We do know he passed on the carpentry trade to his son and raised him in the Jewish traditions and spiritual observances. Joseph was the man entrusted to raise the Son of God. He obeyed God in the face of severe humiliation, severe risk to his life and the upheaval associated with moving and hiding. Joseph did the right thing before God, in the right manner. We see in Joseph a man of strong conviction who practiced what he preached living out his beliefs in his actions. He responded to God in obedience and he practiced self-control. Joseph is a wonderful biblical example of integrity and godly character. And God honoured Joseph's integrity by entrusting him

**Joseph did  
the right  
thing before  
God, in the  
right manner**

with a great responsibility. It's not easy to entrust your children to someone else. Imagine God looking down to choose a man to raise his own son? God drew near to Joseph who had God's trust.

God draws near to Joseph to be the father of His son but he remained a carpenter and carpentry didn't make Joseph wealthy -- not by any means. The offering Mary and Joseph brought to the temple on the occasion of Mary's purification from childbirth was the offering of a poor man, a pair of doves or pigeons (Luke 2:24; Leviticus 12:8). Carpentry was Joseph's world, and the world that Jesus grew up in. He played in the wood shavings on the floor of his father's shop. Carpentry was Joseph's trade and the trade he taught his son. Jesus learned from Joseph to saw and plane, drill and smooth. He watched his father -- the local contractor -- make business contracts and deal with customers. Jesus saw it all.

But first Joseph was faced with the pregnancy of his betrothed. You can bet that tongues in this small town were wagging furiously with the news. Perhaps even in Joseph's own home from his extended family. One can just picture the "*better-than-thou*" attitudes, the askance looks as many came into Joseph's shop. Mary's pregnant! Couldn't Joseph and Mary wait? You'd think they'd know better! Joseph had to have been deeply embarrassed by the whole incident while Mary's pregnancy had placed her at considerable risk in their society. Joseph alone knew he was *not* the father. At least Mary went to visit Elizabeth -- Joseph had to stay and face the music!

This is where we begin to see the whom Mary has been promised to. *husband was a righteous man and to public disgrace, he had in mind*

**Mercy always  
triumphs!**

(1:19) Mercy always triumphs. Joseph could have acted severely toward Mary's apparent indiscretion, but he chose to offer love and mercy, even when he thought he had been wronged. Walking in obedience to God may result in humiliation and disgrace before men. When we obey God, even in the face of adversity and public shame, he leads and guides us. It does not promise we will be understood by those around us -- even our own families. We may face many injustices, many misunderstandings, but... **We're to follow God anyway!**

character of the man to "*Because Joseph her did not want to expose her to divorce her quietly.*"

We know Joseph, was a carpenter and "*a righteous man,*" but we seldom think about the wisdom he handed down to Jesus. It was customary for a son to follow his father into his trade. Joseph practiced his trade finally settling again in the small village of Nazareth, but would have worked in nearby towns as well. Recent archaeological digs at the Galilean city of Zippori, only four miles from Nazareth, have shown extensive building was done in this former district capital. Zippori, called Sepphoris in Greek, was

completely restored by Herod Antipas, during the years that Joseph was working as a carpenter. It's very likely Joseph and young Jesus journeyed to help in the city's reconstruction. Later in Jesus' life, when he returned to his hometown of Nazareth to teach the gospel, the people in the synagogue couldn't get past his former life, asking, "Isn't this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3 NIV).

As a carpenter, Joseph would have taught his son many wise principals which influenced Jesus' teaching and are applicable to us today. Let me summarize some of them through **three simple rules** Joseph lived by which still hold true today.

**MEASURE TWICE  
CUT ONCE**



1. It's an adage often heard today and was probably the saying often heard when Jesus was learning his trade from his earthly dad, Joseph. It teaches us to proceed with caution,

anticipating the consequences of our actions. We need to be careful in our behaviour. People are watching. Nonbelievers are judging Christianity by the way we act, and we can either attract them to the faith or drive them away. We should measure how we spend our lives and we should measure our spiritual growth from working to increase it.

2. Joseph wouldn't have pounded with a chisel or drill a hole with an ax. He'd have a special tool for each task. So it is with us. Rather than anger use understanding; rather than indifference provide encouragement. We can either build people up or tear them down, depending on which tools we use. Jesus wasn't embarrassed to show love and compassion. He was a master at using the right tools, and as his followers, we should do the same.



**Take Care of Your  
Tools and They'll  
Take Care of You**



3. Joseph's livelihood depended on his tools and he would have taken care of them. What tools have we been given a responsibility to take care of? We have the tools of prayer, meditation, worship, and praise. Our most valuable tool, of

of course, is the Bible. If we sink its truths deep into our minds then live them out, God will take care of us, too.

In the body of Christ every Christian's a carpenter with his or her job to do. Like Joseph, we're to mentor our apprentices - sons, daughters, friends and relatives - teaching them the skills necessary to pass faith on to the generation after them. And like Joseph we too can craft good things - graciousness, love, mercy and care going into everything we do. We can build a world in which our Lord is seen by others through what we do. The more we learn of our faith, the better we'll be at helping to build the kingdom of God. We see how God draws near to Joseph, providing him with the tools of the trade - as a carpenter, as a husband and as a father. God has given us all the tools and resources we need. Whether you're at your place of business or at home or at leisure, you're always on the job. Allow God's Holy Spirit to fill you and lead you as you work for God with your head, your hands, and your heart and you can't go wrong.

Give us a call at 519-317-8659 or email to [office.mbbc@explornet.com](mailto:office.mbbc@explornet.com).

**God Bless  
Pastor Dave**